

Making the Case and Getting Involved: *Arts and Creative Sector Investment* *Action Agenda 2026-2027*

Wisconsin's creative sector and the arts and creativity is a critical investment for the state, its communities, and its people

Create Wisconsin calls for substantial and transformational investment in arts and creative people, organizations, businesses, communities, and opportunities throughout the state. This investment will support individual creative workers and business programming and operations, and grow arts and cultural opportunities available and accessible to the people of Wisconsin.



Wisconsin needs this transformational investment to grow and strengthen our unique cultural and artistic assets, bolster state, regional, and local efforts to incubate, attract and retain creative people and businesses, expand opportunities for all, and improve the quality of life for everyone, everywhere in the state.

Local leaders throughout the state understand that investments in cultural and artistic assets will help their communities thrive. But Wisconsin has lagged in investment in its creative economy, especially among its Midwest neighbors, she said. Although the creative sector is a \$12.4 billion economic driver for Wisconsin, the state's \$.20 per capita spending for arts and culture in 2022, was the lowest in the nation and far below our Midwestern neighbors.

Here's why this investment is critical for Wisconsin's future:

- Wisconsin **arts and cultural businesses**, which are integral to the strength and vitality of Wisconsin's creative sector, provide for a **more robust visitor economy** and enhance residents' **quality of life**.
- **35 key arts and culture industries**, which includes self-employed artists, were responsible for **\$12.4 billion in value added** to the Wisconsin economy and **95,176 workers**, according to the US Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Advisors and National Endowment for the Arts, in 2023.
- A 2022 Forward Analytics report, ***Moving In? Exploring Wisconsin's Migration Challenges*** suggests a multipronged approach to attract talent and enhance quality of life, including **bolstering amenities that appeal to young adults**. There is **growing interest in creative economic development as a key component of economic and workforce development strategies** among municipalities, counties, tribal nations, Chambers of Commerce, Visitors and Convention Bureaus, Main Streets and artistic and cultural organizations.
- Wisconsin's Midwest neighboring states invest much more in their creative sector infrastructure, with corresponding results in revenue and community vitality, and in brand images that demonstrate states as creative hubs.

- [Rural Voices for Prosperity](#), a 2020 state of Wisconsin report found: *“Hundreds of thousands of people bring millions of dollars into the economies of Wisconsin’s vibrant rural places each year, encouraged as much by arts and culture as by scenic beauty and outdoor assets.”*

Policy and funding proposals to grow and strengthen the creative sector statewide:

1. The Wisconsin Arts Board, within the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, administers artistic and cultural grant programs for cultural organizations and individual artists. Wisconsin’s current arts and creative economy investment through the Arts Board: in FY2025 and FY2026, the Arts Board has been appropriated \$1,078,000 GPR through the state budget process, or \$0.20 per capita, at a ranking of 48th out of 50 states. **We call for a substantial increase in investment in arts opportunities through the Arts Board.** According to the [National Assembly of State Arts Agencies](#):

- an appropriation of \$5.9 million annually would increase per capita spending in Wisconsin to \$1.00 and a rank of 27th nationally
- an appropriation of \$10 million would set per capita spending in Wisconsin at \$1.68 and a rank of 17th nationally.

2. **Establish a Wisconsin Creative Economy Grant Program.** Under the proposal, grants up to a maximum \$50,000 would be awarded competitively to eligible businesses, tribal and municipal governments, economic development agencies and associations throughout the state for the promotion or development of creative or cultural businesses, products, or services. The program would provide funding for urban and rural development.

3. **Establish capacity-building support and technical assistance programs** for small arts and creative businesses, including self-employed independent artists, through WAB, WEDC, and the Dept. of Tourism.

“When you invest in the arts and culture, you are investing in an industry that strengthens your economy and builds more livable communities.” Arts & Economic Prosperity VI

Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (ACPSA)

Wisconsin’s creative sector contributed \$12.4 BILLION to the state’s economy in 2023 and employed over 95,000 workers - more workers than in the biotech and papermaking industries.

[US Dept. of Commerce - Bureau of Economic Advisors/National Endowment for the Arts]

Arts and Economic Prosperity VI

Wisconsin’s **NONPROFIT ARTS SECTOR:**

- \$933.3 MILLION in Economic Activity in 2022, according to Americans for the Arts and Wisconsin Arts Board
- \$437.1 MILLION spent by arts and culture organizations
- \$496.2 MILLION in event-related expenditures by audiences, including accommodations, food and beverage, recreation, retail shopping, even baby-sitters!

[Americans for the Arts and Wisconsin Arts Board]

Learn more and take action!

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